



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

---

18 January 2004

### **Employing Metaphors in Training**

Successful HR trainers can use the power and value of metaphorical training as a technique to train employees.

In any organization, training is an essential success factor in employee retention and attracting new talent. The most effective training is memorable, well presented and makes the employee realize the value of the skill. In short, it must be compelling; however, it also helps if the training experience is enjoyable, thought-provoking, and interesting.

Linking training content to a metaphor is a great way to accomplish these objectives. A metaphor is an implied comparison - that is, using one word or concept to represent another idea. It is possible to select and apply training metaphors very effectively.

HR trainers can take employees to an Olympic Dive Team training facility. The employees can watch part of the practice and then can be treated to a presentation by the team coach. The employees can explore how to take a group of individual champions and get them to work as a team. The combination of a venue memorably different from a typical office classroom setting and the opportunity to meet and hear from people who may be in the news or engaged in an activity they only dream about is a powerful device to capture and retain the attention of employees. In fact, it becomes quickly apparent that there are basic core principles of respect and leadership that make any work group effective.

Service animals also offer great metaphor opportunities. The HR trainers can use guide dogs, police dogs and even monkeys that serve the disabled to discuss the concept of the "team of two." Community groups and individuals are often readily available and interested in sharing their teamwork relationships with an audience.

In the training concepts mentioned above, the use of facilities, guest speakers, and tours can be obtained at little or no cost. In fact, it is amazing how many resources are right in one's own neighborhood. Health care facilities, universities, sports teams, construction sites, and nuclear power plants - the world is rich with metaphors that HR executives can use to make training come alive.